



Local



OPINION

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Plus one: not just for same-sex partners

Plus one.

It could be coming to Colorado Springs. It will be portrayed either as the latest harbinger of the apocalypse or as a rational response to society's evolving standards.

"Plus one" is a reference to a form of health insurance that covers a worker plus one other person, whether it's a spouse, domestic partner, parent or adult child. It is controversial to some because it would cover the same-sex domestic partner of the employee, but plus-one programs go much further than that by addressing a variety of family needs; for instance, allowing a worker to include a parent with Alzheimer's or an adult child with some kind of disability, or who might merely lack health insurance.

Citizens Project, the Colorado Springs-based nonprofit launched in 1992 to fight the Amendment 2 campaign, announced Thursday it will be urging the Colorado Springs City Council to adopt a plus-one program for city workers.

"The city of Colorado Springs needs to catch up to Colorado and the rest of the country in protecting families and extending benefits," said Barbara Van Hoy, Citizen Project's executive director.

The city was in the vanguard on the issue in 2003, when a divided City Council approved health-care benefits for the same-sex partners of city employees. The program lasted less than a year, though, as Mayor Lionel Rivera won a campaign in which he promised to eliminate the benefits.

Rivera made good on the promise in early 2004, and the partners of a handful of city employees lost coverage.

Before the same-sex benefits were voted in, Councilman Larry Small backed a plus-one program, but concerns about the cost persuaded the council to adopt the financially modest same-sex idea.

This week, Small said actuarial studies he's read show a plus-one program can work. "It's doable, it's very doable," he said.

Van Hoy acknowledged the only way a plus-one benefits program can win approval is by adopting a "budget neutral" stance.

"The employees would have to buy in," he said.

"This is a great way to support families, and it would make Colorado Springs a more competitive employer," he added.

Because plus-one benefits are neutral toward sexual orientation, the city could change its polarized history on one aspect of gay rights.

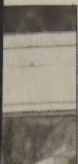
At one time or another, council members Small, Jan Martin, Jerry Heimlicher, Scott Hente and Bernie Herpin have supported the plus-one concept. Technically, five votes are all that are needed.

But it would be nice if city employees knew this time they wouldn't have the rug pulled from beneath them, as was done in 2004.

Our city employees ought to be assured their benefits won't be subject to the next electoral whim.

Five council votes would be great — plus one, or maybe even two.

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Standing on the porch of a home on West Boulder Street, Matt Yamashiro.

FOR DEFENDANT, NO 'GET OUT OF JAIL FREE' CARD

BY JOHN C. ENSSLIN
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Timothy Barfoot will not be getting out of jail despite having been held more than 48 hours over the weekend without a judge reviewing his arrest on suspicion of attempted first-degree murder. Barfoot was held approximately 47 hours before a judge examined a police affidavit outlining the arrest. The 37-year-old Colorado Springs man was arrested early Saturday for allegedly shooting and wounding a neighbor. But after a 90-minute hearing Thursday, 4th District Judge John DuBois ruled law enforcement had done nothing wrong in processing the arrest. DuBois also found that police had not obtained any evidence against Barfoot as a result of the delay in getting his case before a judge.

The rule stems from a 1991 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that held a suspect can be detained without a warrant for up to 48 hours before a judge must determine whether the arrest was proper. In El Paso County, sheriff's spokeswoman Lt. Lari Sevene said officers at the jail work hard to make sure that the 48-hour rule is observed.

"This is certainly the exception, not the rule," Sevene said of the Barfoot case.

Barfoot was arrested at 1:40 p.m. Saturday after police had interviewed him about a shooting near his apartment in the 2700 block of East Uintah Street.

Colorado Springs police prepared a probable cause affidavit for his arrest and booked Barfoot at 6:44 a.m. Saturday.

A few moments later, the paperwork was filed along with other cases for review by an on-call judge who came to the jail that weekend to review those cases.

However, for some unknown reason, jail officials said Barfoot's case was not reviewed until he was brought before a county judge on Monday morning.

Sevene said it could have been a simple oversight.

But she was unsure how the case eluded the on-call judge's scrutiny.

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